

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY LONDON

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 NEW DELHI 14496

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, IN, UK

SUBJECT: MRS. GANDHI SPEAKS: A RINGING DENUNCIATION OF FOREIGN
INTERFERENCE IN INDIA, AND TWO ANODYNE INTERVIEWS WITH
BRITISH JOURNALISTS

REF: NEW DELHI 14407

SUMMARY: IN A POLITICAL SPEECH SEPTEMBER 30, MRS. GANDHI MADE
AN ATTACK, WITHOUT ALLUDING TO SPECIFIC COUNTRIES, ON ALLEGED
FOREIGN INTERFERENCE IN INDIA AND SUPPORT FOR DOMESTIC
OPPOSITION. HER PUBLIC REMARKS CONTRAST WITH ANODYNE AND BENIGN
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COMMENTS TO TWO BRITISH JOURNALISTS WHO ACCOMPANIED MARGARET

THATCHER TO INDIA LAST WEEK. IN HER SPEECH, MRS. GANDHI EQUATED GOOD CONGRESS PARTY WORKERS WITH GOOD INDIANS, ACCUSED "DIVISIVE FORCES" IN INDIA OF GETTING SUPPORT AND MONEY FROM ABROAD, CHARGED THE RICH NATIONS OF INVENTING SLANDERS ABOUT INDIA, AND SAID THAT THEY PRETENDED TO LOVE INDIA AND WANT DEMOCRACY THERE BUT HAD TALKED AGAINST INDIA EVEN WHEN THERE WAS NO EMERGENCY OR PRESS CURBS. INDIAN EFFORTS TO PURSUE AN INDEPENDENT PATH WERE SEEN BY RICH COUNTRIES AS A DANGER TO VESTED INTERESTS IN INDIA AND ABROAD. MRS. GANDHI MAY HAVE BEEN IRRITATED AT REPEATED QUESTIONS FROM MRS. THATCHER, MR. THORPE, AND THE BRITISH JOURNALISTS IN THE LAST WEEK AND HAVE VENTED HER ANNOYANCE ON HER INDIAN AUDIENCE. MRS. GANDHI'S COMMENTS COULD BE PRE-ELECTION RHETORIC; BUT THEY COULD ALSO BE A JUSTIFICATION FOR NOT HOLDING ELECTIONS. END SUMMARY.

1. IN A PARTISAN ADDRESS SEPT. 30 AT THE OPENING OF THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL STUDIES AND RESEARCH (A NEWLY ESTABLISHED INSTITUTE SET UP BY THE CONGRESS TO INDOCTRINATE 2500 INSTRUCTORS WHO WILL IN TURN TRAIN 500,000 CONGRESS WORKERS IN PARTY IDEOLOGY), MRS. GANDHI WAS REPORTED BY SAMACHAR TO HAVE DEFINED A "GOOD CONGRESSMAN" AS A "GOOD INDIAN." SHE CHARGED THAT "DIVISIVE FORCES" IN INDIA WERE GETTING FUNDS AND SUPPORT FROM ABROAD AND THAT VESTED INTERESTS "IN INDIA AND ABROAD" SAW DANGER IN INDIAN EFFORTS TO ESTABLISH ITS OWN STANDARDS RATHER THAN APE THE AFFLUENT NATIONS AND HAD THEREFORE "TURNED THE SEARCHLIGHT" ON INDIA. FINDING NOTHING WRONG, THEY HAD RESORTED TO INVENTION. SHE TOLD HER AUDIENCE THEY NEEDED TO UNDERSTAND THE METHODS RESORTED TO BY FORCES INIMICAL TO INDIA IN THEIR STUDIES.

2. MRS. GANDHI SAID THAT THE FOREIGNERS WHO PRIOR TO THE EMERGENCY HAD CRITICIZED INDIA FOR NEGLECTING FAMILY PLANNING WERE NOW SAYING THE GOI WAS INTERFERING IN THE PRIVATE LIVES OF INDIVIDUALS. DISCUSSING GOI FAMILY PLANNING EFFORTS SHE LATER SAID SHE REGRETTED THAT A "WHISPERING CAMPAIGN" SIMILAR TO THAT PERFECTED BY THE HINDU MAHASABHA, THE RSS AND THE SOCIALIST PARTY HAD BEEN STARTED. IT WAS SIMILAR TO CHARGES AT THE TIME OF INDIA'S FIRST ELECTIONS THAT WATER USED FOR HYDROELECTRIC POWER WOULD AFTERWARDS BE USELESS FOR IRRIGATION OR THAT JAWAHARAL NEHRU HAD NO REGARD FOR THE COW. SHE NOTED THAT RUMORS OF FORCED STERILIZATION HAD LED TO BEATING UP OF POLICEMEN IN

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CALCUTTA AND CALLED ANTI-FAMILY PLANNING TALK "ANTI-NATIONAL" SINCE IT SLOWED DOWN THE NATION'S PROGRESS. SHE PARTICULARLY REGRETTED EFFORTS TO CREATE MISUNDERSTANDING AMONG MUSLIMS IN THIS RESPECT.

3. MRS. GANDHI CHARGED THAT THE "SO-CALLED DEMOCRATIC COUNTRIES" HAD BEEN SUPPORTING STATES WHICH HAD OPEN DICTATORSHIP WHERE NOBODY COULD ASK WHETHER THERE WOULD BE ELECTIONS AND HOW

MANY MURDERS HAD TAKEN PLACE. THESE COUNTRIES WERE CONCERNED ABOUT INDIA, THEY SAID, BECAUSE THEY LOVED INDIA SO MUCH THEY WANTED DEMOCRACY THERE. BUT THEY HAD TALKED AGAINST INDIA EVEN BEFORE THE EMERGENCY AND WHEN THERE WERE NO PRESS CURBS. POWERFUL ORGANIZATIONS IN THESE COUNTRIES SUPPORTED THE OPPOSITION IN INDIA BECAUSE INDIA FOR THE FIRST TIME WAS TRYING TO AWAKEN ITS WEAKER SECTIONS AND TO STRIKE OUT ON AN INDEPENDENT PATH OF ITS OWN. THIS APPEARED AS A DANGER TO VESTED INTERESTS IN INDIA AND ABROAD.

4. MRS. GANDHI WAS INTERVIEWED SEPARATELY BY BRITISH JOURNALISTS ANN MORROW (THE TELEGRAPH) AND JULIAN HAVILLAND (ITV) LAST WEEK IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE VISIT OF BRITISH POLITICAL LEADERS MARGARET THATCHER AND JEREMY THORPE (REFTEL). THE MORROW INTERVIEW WAS CARRIED IN A SAMACHAR RELEASE ON THE FRONT PAGES OF THE CAPITAL PRESS ON SEPT. 30. AMALGAMATED HIGHLIGHTS OF THE TWO INTERVIEWS FOLLOW:

A) THE PRIME MINISTER SAID SHE KNEW THAT MRS. THATCHER WAS VISITING SOME MEMBERS OF THE OPPOSITION. THE PRIME MINISTER EXPLAINED THAT MRS. THATCHER HAD ASKED ABOUT SO DOING, AND WAS TOLD THERE WAS NO OBJECTION.

B) ASKED ABOUT THE NUMBERS OF PEOPLE IN PRISON, MRS. GANDHI SAID THAT PEOPLE ARE BEING RELEASED GRADUALLY. SHE IS QUOTED, "I KEEP WRITING TO THE STATES TO ASK THEM TO REVIEW CASES AND TRY TO RELEASE AS MANY AS POSSIBLE. I DON'T KNOW MYSELF HOW MANY ARE DETAINED." IN ONE OF THE INTERVIEWS, NOT PUBLISHED, SHE SAID THE OPPOSITION LEADER MORAJI DESAI WAS NOT IMPRISONED; HE WAS ONLY "DETAINED." ANSWERING A QUESTION, SHE SAID THERE WERE ONLY 5 OR 6 SUCH LEADERS STILL DETAINED.

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C) THE PRIME MINISTER SAID SHE WAS PLEASED WITH THE RESULTS OF THE STATE OF THE EMERGENCY. THINGS HAD BEEN ON THE DOWN GRADE, SHE SAID, AND THE OPPOSITION HAD BEEN PLANNING A NATION-WIDE CAMPAIGN TO WEAKEN HE GOVERNMENT AND IF POSSIBLE TO REMOVE IT IN AN ENTIRELY UNDEMOCRATIC AND UNCONSTITUTIONAL WAY. MRS GANDHI SAID SOMETHING HAD TO BE DONW TO SHOCK THE PEOPLE INTO A REALIZATION OF WHAT WAS HAPPENING. SHE SAID SOME PEOPLE ARE STILL IN A STATE OF SHOCK. IF SOME WERE NERVOUS, SHE CONTINUED, IT IS THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE DONE WRONG THINGS. THE PRIME MINISTER IS AGAIN QUOTED: "EVEN I WAS ASTONISHED WHEN THE EMERGENCY WAS DECLARED. THERE WAS CONFIDENTIAL

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NOT A MURMUR AT ALL. THERE WAS NOT A SINGLE CASE WHERE THE POLICE HAD TO BE USED." THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THE POSITIVE RESULT OF THE EMERGENCY SO DAR IS THE NEW SENSE OF CONFIDENCE.

D) MRS GANDHI SAID IT WAS ASTONISHING HOW PEOPLE HAVE RESPONDED TO THE FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAM. SHE ADDED THAT THE CHIEF MINISTER AND HEALTH MINISTER OF MAHARASHTRA REPORTED TO HER THAT THE PEOPLE WANTED IT MADE COMPULSORY, BUT SAID THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT HAD NOT YET GIVEN ITS ASSENT. SHE ADMITTED THERE MAY BE CASES WHERE SOMEONE IS HARASSED EITHER DELIBERATELY IN ORDER TO GET THE GOVERNMENT INTO DISREPUTE, OR FOR SOME LOCAL REASON, BUT EXPLAINED THAT SUCH CASES ARE VERY LIMITED. SHE SAID SHE HAD CAUTIONED CHIEF MINISTERS AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES TO BE VERY CAREFUL.

E) THE PRIME MINISTER SPECULATED THAT IT MIGHT HAVE

HELPED INDIA TO HAVE CLOSED ITS DOORS IN THE BEGINNING AS CHINA DID, BUT NOW SHE SAID IT WAS NOT ONLY TOO LATE, BUT NOT DESIRABLE. SHE SAID SHE HATED BEING FEARED, AND IS QUOTED, "I DON'T LIKE THAT AT ALL. I JUST CANNOT UNDERSTAND HOW ANYONE CAN BE FRIGHTENED OF ME." SHE CONTENDED SHE DID NOT REALLY HAVE A LOT OF POWER, BUT MERELY WAS ABLE TO TRY AND PERSUADE EACH STATE.

F) ASKED ABOUT HER SON, SANJAY, THE PRIME MINISTER SAID HTAT HE SAW A SITUATION WHICH HE WAS WORRIED ABOUT AND FELT IT WAS THE DUTY OF EVERYONE TO HELP OUT. SHE SAID HE HAS HAD REMARKABLE SUCCESS ORGANIZING THE YOUTH CONGRESS, AND ALLUDING TO THE GENERATION GAP WHEN "WE TALK TO YOUNG PEOPLE", MRS GANDHI SAID SANJAY WAS MORE INTERESTED IN POLICIES RATHER THAN POLITICS.

G) REFERRING TO THE COLOMBO NON-ALIGNED CONFERENCE, THE PRIME MINISTER SAID, "I TRIED TO DISASSOCIATE MYSELF FROM ANTI-WEST TIRADES THERE."

5. COMMENT: THERE IS A SHARP CONTRAST BETWEEN THE COMMENTS BY MRS GANDHI TO A CONGRESS POLITICAL AUDIENCE
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AND HER REMARKS TO THE FOREIGN JOURNALIST AND BRITISH MPS (REFTEL). MRS GANDHI'S SPEECH TO THE CONGRESS AUDIENCE, CONCEIVABLY, REFLECTS HER PENT-UP FRUSTRATION AT THE TYPES OF QUESTIONS SHE HAD BEEN GETTING FROM BRITISH VISITORS IN THE LAST WEEK, QUESTIONS TO WHICH SHE HAD PRIVATELY RESPONDED WITH APPARENT POLITENESS AND CALM. ON THE OTHER HAND, MRS GANDHI GAVE AN INTERVIEW TO THE SAN FRANCISCO SUN REPORTER AUGUST 24 (RELEASED BY SAMACHAR ALSO ON SEPT 30) WHICH MADE SOME OF THE SAME POINTS AS WERE IN HER SEPT 30 SPEECH, INCLUDING ALLEGATIONS THAT CERTAIN GOVERNMENTS AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS WERE OPENLY SUPPORTING CERTAIN INDIAN INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS FINANCIALLY AND OTHERWISE.

6. WE DO NOT HAVE A TEXT OF MRS GANDHI'S SEPT 30 REMARKS AND WOULD NOT WANT TO DRAW EXCESSIVELY BROAD CONCLUSIONS FROM THE WIRESERVICE REPORTING. NEVERTHELESS, IF HER INTENT IS TO ENCOURAGE TEACHERS AND STUDENTS IN THE CADRE INSTITUTE TO ADOPT A SEMI-XENOPHOBIC VIEW OF THE CONGRESS PARTY EMBATTLED AGAINST FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC FOES, THE OUTLOOK OF THE GRADUATES OF THE INSTITUTE WILL HARDLY FAVOR WARM AND SYMPATHETIC RELATIONS WITH THE WEST. IN THE BEST LIGHT, MRS GANDHI'S COMMENTS COULD BE SEEN AS PRE-ELECTION RHETORIC;

THEY COULD ALSO BE SEEN AS JUSTIFICATION FOR NOT
HOLDING ELECTIONS.
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